



Montana

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### **Blue Creek School Earns Statewide Award for Healthy School Lunch Program**

(Billings, MT) On March 18, 2014, Blue Creek Elementary School, Billings, MT, became the 11<sup>th</sup> school district statewide to receive the *Healthier Montana Menu Challenge Award* for its healthy school lunch program. Blue Creek Elementary School, located 5 miles south of Billings, serves 201 students in kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Blue Creek School received a banner and certificate proclaiming the award, as well as a \$500 check, which they have invested in new kitchen equipment.

Blue Creeks' dedicated school food service staff, Michelle Wayman and Jill Kuhler, works hard to provide four daily lunch menu choices: a hot entrée prepared from scratch, two or more appealing sandwich choices on multigrain breads and a salad bar stocked with a rotating selection of vegetables, fruits, and proteins.

To maximize funds with which to buy more fresh fruit and vegetables, Mrs. Wayman and Ms. Kuhler carefully plan menus, streamline food production practices and utilize USDA Food programs. Minimizing waste has been key to controlling costs. Beginning at 8:30 each morning, they prepare an average of 130 made-to-order lunches in a space the size of an average home kitchen. Plate waste is reduced by allowing the students their choice of entrée and their preferred selection of fruits and vegetables from the salad bar.

The cooks delight in introducing children to new foods, many of which students experience for the first time during school lunch. Students are encouraged to sample new foods such as edamame (soybeans still in their pods) and Brussels sprouts. Roasted vegetables combos, like a mix of roasted broccoli and cauliflower, have proven to be one of the students' favorite ways to eat produce. Mrs. Wayman said, "Students eat over twice as much vegetable on days we roast them. We don't mind the expense because we know eating extra vegetables is so good for the students."

Ms. Kuhler and Mrs. Wayman's effort along with student's participation prove that meals that meet the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act criteria can be delicious as well as nutritious. Blue Creek School is commended for fueling their students with healthy foods so that they can perform their best at school.

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